

A Post-Election Reflection

There won't be a "red wave" without red-pilling.



by Bruce Bawer

I am an American, but I haven't set foot in the states for years. Yes, my daily Internet access provides me with the illusion that I'm in touch with life back home and that I know how people are thinking and feeling. But I can't really be sure at all that I'm getting the right bead on things.

So when a great many of the American political commentators and podcasters whom I most respect predicted a "red wave" or even a "red tsunami" on Election Day, I thought: Well, I hope so. How could I demur? After all, they're at the center of the action. I'm not.

Still, what I wanted to say to them was, first of all, this: You saw what happened two years ago. You know that there

hasn't been any comprehensive effort to make the voting system trustworthy. So how can you be so certain of a massive Republican sweep?

Sure enough, early on Election Day came news from Maricopa County, Arizona, of a problem with the vote-counting machines. For months, people around the country—around the world—had been following the gubernatorial race between the terrific newcomer Kari Lake, who seemed almost too good to be true, and the execrable Katie Hobbs, who refused even to debate her. In the latest polls, Lake had been up by 11 points. But Hobbs had one advantage: as Arizona's Secretary of State, she was supervising the election. And so they were neck and neck.

Repeat: *Hobbs was supervising the election.* How was that even possible? It sounds like a joke. It sounds like something out of Cuba. Why wasn't something done about this? Why didn't Lake, and why didn't the Arizona GOP, insist on it?

They only need to use these vote-counting machines once a year, at most. Do they check them out beforehand? Do they test them? Do they acquire backup machines?

Why do we need vote-counting machines, anyway? A million years ago, when I was a kid, votes were counted by hand, and the results were in within a few hours. Yes, JFK still managed to cheat his way to victory in Illinois and Texas, but that was a far more limited operation than what seems to have happened in 2020 and, again, perhaps, on Tuesday.

But set aside the suspicious vote-counting process and ponder the voting itself. Other commentators have made valid points about the GOP candidates being lousy and about the Republican Party doing a lame job of financing their campaigns. But these and other sensible observations aside, the main thing I wanted to say to the confident "red wave" forecasters was this: A "red wave," to say nothing of a "red tsunami," would require the unprecedented red-pilling of millions of Democrats. And

yet what evidence is there that any such mass red-pilling has taken place?

Yes, Biden has been a disaster. The chaotic, costly pullout from Afghanistan. The anarchy at the border, combined with the practice of secretly flying illegals to locations around the United States. All the draconian, scientifically unfounded, and unequally enforced COVID regulations. The abrupt shutdown of the Keystone XL pipeline, and, as a result, the utterly predictable increase in gas prices. Inflation. Gender madness. And more.

As a result of all these follies, Biden's approval ratings among Democratic voters have reached catastrophic lows. But this doesn't mean that most Democratic voters have gone over to what they consider the dark side.

If you're reading this, chances are that when you cast your vote, your focus is on real-life issues. Gas prices. Inflation. You care about law and order, and hence didn't like it when Democratic mayors and governors allowed Antifa and Black Lives Matter to run riot. You care about individual liberty, and hence resented the restrictions imposed during the pandemic by many of those same Democratic mayors and governors.

Millions of Democratic voters, however, don't think like that. Many of them can afford not to. They're part of the social, cultural, and political establishment—or at least think they're part of it, or want to be seen as being part of it. They're well off enough, for example, not to have to worry too much about rising prices at the gas pump or supermarket.

But even those Democrats who aren't so well off, and whose lives *are* affected by grocery bills and lawlessness in the streets, won't let such phenomena change their vote. Because their politics, take them for all in all, aren't very firmly grounded in reality.

On the contrary, millions of them are driven, to at least some extent, by ideology. They buy the idea that American capitalism—and the American consumer—should take a serious hit to stop climate change, an ideologically rooted concept for which they've seen no evidence whatsoever. They defend the depredations of Antifa and BLM as noble assaults on a corrupt system, even if their own windows end up being broken.

Their own individual liberty, if on their radar at all, is far lower down on their list of values than gestures in the direction of collective well-being, so that during the lockdown they welcomed state-ordained limitations on their movements—even though those limitations had no basis in science. They believe that certain groups are by definition oppressed, and so will automatically oppose any action, however reasonable or just, that might conceivably harm illegal immigrants, offend Muslims, or make trans people uncomfortable—and by the same token will support almost anything that will presumably make members of these groups happy.

Moreover, the media that they trust have taught them to view with contempt voters who are preoccupied with such issues as crime and the cost of living. They've been persuaded that when some voters speak of crime, it's a coded way of expressing racism, and that when some voters complain about high gasoline prices, they're simply being selfish: for isn't it far more socially responsible to worry about *climate change*—to which fossil fuels contribute massively—than to gripe about whatever one has to pay to fill one's gas tank?

They see themselves as taking the long view. The unselfish view. Yes, you can describe their politics as “virtue signaling”—and you'd be right. But there's something else they want to signal: *the boundary between themselves and the rest of us*. They're desperate to make it clear to the world that they're not MAGA folks—not grubby little “deplorables,” always preoccupied with their own narrow interests and their own so-

called freedom.

After Biden took office, his handlers defined him largely in opposition to Trump. Trump wanted to build a wall, so Biden opposed it. Trump made the U.S. energy-independent, so Biden had to undo that, *prontissimo*. Millions of establishment Democratic voters operate the same way, perhaps often unconsciously: they define themselves in opposition to the likes of us.

This leads them to take palpably outrageous positions. Because we're concerned about abortion, many of them not only support it in the old Bill Clinton sense ("safe, legal, and rare") but support it right up to birth and beyond.

Because we dare to point out that affirmative action is unfair to Asians, they support even the most extreme versions of it. When illegal immigrants are exempted from certain COVID rules that American citizens are compelled to follow, they cheer.

When thugs pillage drug stores and push commuters onto subway tracks, their sympathies aren't with the victims but with the perpetrators, whose immediate release onto the streets by Soros prosecutors they celebrate as the ultimate in social justice. Even though the issue didn't even exist a few years ago, they support the "right" of young people to be butchered by surgeons in the name of gender identity.

And though the "defund the police" movement now seems to have died out, remarkably few Democrats kicked up a fuss about it when it was riding high.

What they're doing when they embrace such irrational positions is, in very large part, setting themselves apart from us. They see themselves as educated, cultured, worldly, sophisticated, empathic—deeply concerned about the welfare of society as a whole—and they see us as being none of those things. They see themselves as having class, and from the beginning they recoiled from Donald Trump mainly because, in their eyes, he

had zero class. They considered him a vulgarian, and they assume that everybody who supported him is also a vulgarian. And they see our political positions as an extension of our vulgarity—petty, selfish, backward, crass.

And their own political stances are, for them, identity markers, less about reality than about image, less about substance than about style, less, even, about actual policies and specific actions than about making the right gestures, parroting the right slogans, and cleaving to the right ideology. In their calculus, the effect of a political action matters less than the alleged motivation for it, and a political candidate's sex, race, and sexual orientation is infinitely more important than his or her integrity and competence.

These establishment voters identify with—and trust implicitly—other establishment figures of whom the rest of us are reflexively suspicious. For example, the “experts” who order lockdowns, masks, distancing, and vaccinations. The “experts” who assert that climate change is an apocalyptic reality. The “experts” who insist that sex-change surgery for kids is just plain terrific. The “experts” who repeatedly assured America that Trump was a Putin puppet and that Hunter Biden's laptop was a Russian plant.

And even when the “experts” are proven wrong, it doesn't sway establishment voters in the slightest. Because, again, none of this is really about facts. It's about group loyalty, about self-image, about ideology.

Bottom line: no “red wave.” For that, you need more than a couple of years of a disastrous Democratic presidency. You need millions of Democrats who've actually seen the light, who've snapped out of the brainwashing, who've come to realize that abortion is still legal and that Trump isn't the devil and that what happened on Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021, wasn't anything close to an insurrection. You need a big chunk

of the American population to experience a road-to-Damascus moment. And I'm afraid that until that great awakening occurs, expecting a "red wave" at the polls is, alas, sheer folly.

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